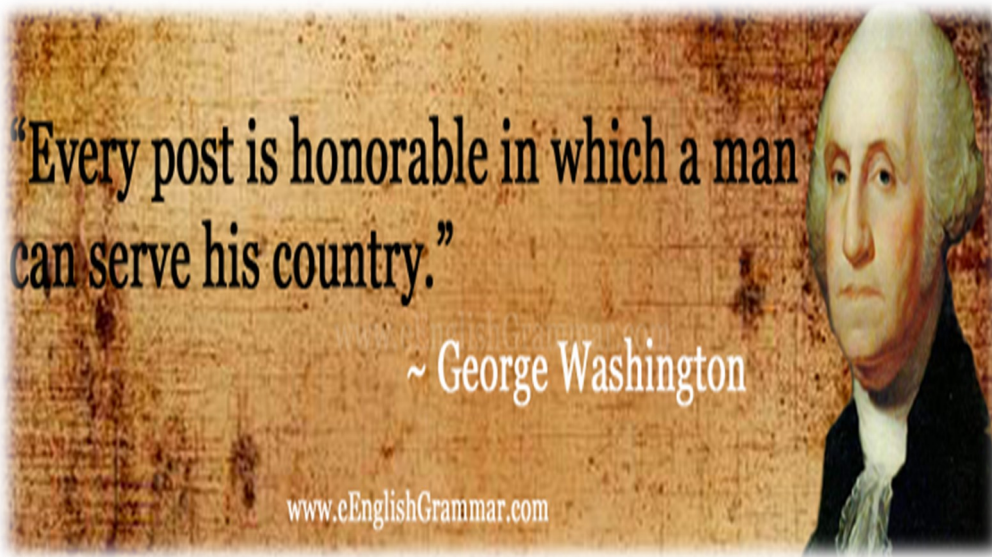


Greatest of All Times

108

**G
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**Globally selected
PERSONALITIES**



22 Feb 1732 <::><::><::> 14 Dec 1799

Compiled by:
Prof Dr S Ramalingam
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22 Feb 1732



14 Dec 1799

Biography

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/george-washington/>



**[The biography for President Washington and past presidents is
courtesy of the White House Historical Association.]**

On April 30, 1789, George Washington, standing on the balcony of Federal Hall on Wall Street in New York, took his oath of office as the first President of the United States. "As the first of everything, in our situation will serve to establish a Precedent," he wrote James Madison, "it is devoutly wished on my part, that these precedents may be fixed on true principles."



Born in 1732 into a Virginia planter family, he learned the morals, manners, and body of knowledge requisite for an 18th century Virginia gentleman.

He pursued two intertwined interests: military arts and western expansion. At 16 he helped survey Shenandoah lands for Thomas, Lord Fairfax. Commissioned a lieutenant colonel in 1754, he fought the first skirmishes of what grew into the

French and Indian War. The next year, as an aide to Gen. Edward Braddock, he escaped injury although four bullets ripped his coat and two horses were shot from under him.

From 1759 to the outbreak of the American Revolution, Washington managed his lands around Mount Vernon and served in the Virginia House of Burgesses. Married to a widow, Martha Dandridge Custis, he devoted himself to a busy and happy life. But like his fellow planters, Washington felt himself exploited by British merchants and hampered by British regulations. As the quarrel with the mother country grew acute, he moderately but firmly voiced his resistance to the restrictions.

When the Second Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia in May 1775, Washington, one of the Virginia delegates, was elected Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. On July 3, 1775, at Cambridge, Massachusetts, he took command of his ill-trained troops and embarked upon a war that was to last six grueling years.

He realized early that the best strategy was to harass the British. He reported to Congress, "we should on all Occasions avoid a general Action, or put anything to the Risk, unless compelled by a necessity, into which we ought never to be drawn." Ensuing battles saw him fall back slowly, then strike unexpectedly. Finally in 1781 with the aid of French allies—he forced the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Washington longed to retire to his fields at Mount Vernon. But he soon realized that the Nation under its Articles of Confederation was not functioning well, so he became a prime mover in the steps leading to the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in 1787. When the new Constitution was ratified, the Electoral College unanimously elected Washington President.

He did not infringe upon the policy making powers that he felt the Constitution gave Congress. But the determination of foreign policy became preponderantly a Presidential concern. When the French Revolution led to a major war between France and England, Washington refused to accept entirely the recommendations of either his Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, who was pro-French, or his Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, who was pro-

British. Rather, he insisted upon a neutral course until the United States could grow stronger.

To his disappointment, two parties were developing by the end of his first term. Worn out of politics, feeling old, he retired at the end of his second. In his Farewell Address, he urged his countrymen to forswear excessive party spirit and geographical distinctions. In foreign affairs, he warned against long-term alliances.

Washington enjoyed less than three years of retirement at Mount Vernon, for he died of a throat infection December 14, 1799. For months the Nation mourned him.

Kindly visits the Web Link to see
the Photographs of **ALL** the Presidents of USA

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/>

George Washington



Portrait c. 1803

1st President of the United States

In office

April 30, 1789 – March 4, 1797

Vice President John Adams

Preceded by Office established

Succeeded by John Adams

7th Senior Officer of the United States Army

In office

July 13, 1798 – December 14, 1799

President [John Adams](#)

Preceded by [James Wilkinson](#)

Succeeded by [Alexander Hamilton](#)

[Commander in Chief](#) of the [Continental Army](#)

In office

June 19, 1775 – December 23, 1783

Appointed by [Continental Congress](#)

Preceded by *Office established*

Succeeded by [Henry Knox](#) (as [Senior Officer](#))

14th [Chancellor of the College of William & Mary](#)

In office

April 30, 1788 – December 14, 1799

President [James Madison](#)

Preceded by [Richard Terrick](#) (1776)

Succeeded by [John Tyler](#) (1859)

[Delegate](#) from [Virginia](#) to the [Continental Congress](#)

In office

September 5, 1774 – June 16, 1775

Preceded by *Office established*

Succeeded by [Thomas Jefferson](#)

Member of the [Virginia House of Burgesses](#)

In office

July 24, 1758 – June 24, 1775

Preceded by [Hugh West](#)

Succeeded by *Office abolished*


Constituency

- [Frederick County](#) (1758–1765)
- [Fairfax County](#) (1765–1775)

Personal details

Born February 22, 1732 [[O.S.](#) February 11, 1731]
[Popes Creek](#), Virginia Colony, British America

Died December 14, 1799 (aged 67)
[Mount Vernon](#), Virginia, U.S.

Resting place Mount Vernon, Virginia
 [38°42′28.4″N 77°05′09.9″W](#)

Political party [Independent](#)

Spouse [Martha Dandridge](#)

(m. 1759)

Parents

- [Augustine Washington](#)
- [Mary Ball Washington](#)

Relatives [Washington family](#)

Occupation

- Farmer
- military officer
- statesman
- surveyor

Awards

- [Congressional Gold Medal](#)
- [Thanks of Congress](#)^[1]

Signature**Military service****Allegiance**

- [Great Britain](#)
- United States

Branch/service

- [Virginia Militia](#)
- [Continental Army](#)
- [United States Army](#)

Years of service

- 1752–1758 (Virginia Militia)
- 1775–1783 (Continental Army)
- 1798–1799 (U.S. Army)

Rank

- Colonel (1st [Virginia Regiment](#))
- [Colonel](#) (Virginia Militia)
- [General](#) and [Commander in Chief](#) (Continental Army)
- [Lieutenant General](#) (U.S. Army)
- [General of the Armies](#) (promoted posthumously in 1976 by [Congress](#))

Commands

- [Virginia Regiment](#)
- Continental Army
- United States Army

Battles/wars

hide

See list

- [French and Indian War](#)
 - [Battle of Jumonville Glen](#)
 - [Battle of Fort Necessity](#)
 - [Braddock Expedition](#)
 - [Battle of the Monongahela](#)
 - [Forbes Expedition](#)
- [American Revolutionary War](#)
 - [Boston campaign](#)
 - [New York and New Jersey campaign](#)
 - [Philadelphia campaign](#)
 - [Yorktown campaign](#)
- [Northwest Indian War](#)
- [Whiskey Rebellion](#)



<https://www.loc.gov/collections/george-washington-papers/about-this-collection/>

COLLECTION

George Washington Papers

About this Collection

The papers of army officer and first U.S. president George Washington (1732-1799) held in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress constitute the largest collection of original Washington papers in the world. They consist of approximately 77,000 items accumulated by Washington between 1745 and 1799, including correspondence, diaries, and financial and military records. The collection documents Washington's childhood education, his first career as a surveyor, his experiences as a militia colonel during the French and Indian War, his election as a Virginia delegate to the first and second Continental Congresses, his role as general of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, his presidency of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, his two terms as president (1789-1797), and his retirement. Also documented is his management of Mount Vernon, his plantation home in Virginia, and the lives of his family, servants, and slaves. Notable correspondents include John Adams, Benedict Arnold, Edward Braddock, Alexander Hamilton, John Hancock, Thomas Jefferson, and the Marquis de Lafayette. Because of the wide range of Washington's interests, activities, and correspondents, which include ordinary citizens as well as celebrated figures, his papers are a rich source for almost every aspect of colonial and early American life.

All or selected parts of this collection were transcribed by volunteers participating in the [By the People](#) crowdsourcing transcription project of the Library of Congress. Crowdsourced text associated with the specific image from which it was transcribed can be viewed by clicking on the "Image w/Text" option above the image itself, or by selecting the "Text" option in the dropdown menu below the image. Selecting "Text (all pages)" opens a document containing the available transcribed text for all the images in the respective object record.

A transcription dataset for this collection is available online as [Transcription dataset from the George Washington Papers, Manuscript Division](#). For general information on transcription datasets at the Library of Congress and their uses, see ["Datasets at the Library of Congress: A Research Guide."](#)

Description of Series

This collection of George Washington Papers is organized into nine series, which are listed below. Additional information about some of these series may be found in the [Series Notes](#) under the Articles and Essays tab.

Series 1, Exercise Books, Diaries, and Surveys, ca. 1745-1799

Three exercise books (school copy books), ca.1745-1747, kept by Washington between the ages of about thirteen and fifteen; thirty-six of the diaries kept by Washington from about the age of sixteen until his death in 1799; and notes and drawings documenting Washington's early career as a surveyor, 1749-1752 and undated. For more information, see the [Series Notes](#).

Series 2, Letterbooks, 1754-1799

Forty-one letterbooks used by Washington to keep copies of his correspondence, dating from the beginning of the French and Indian War until his death. For more information, see the [Series Notes](#).

Series 3, Varick Transcripts, 1775-1785

Forty-four letterbooks containing copies of the correspondence Washington accumulated as Commander of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. These were made by Richard Varick, at Washington's direction, in 1781-1785. Many of the original letters Varick copied from are in Series 4. For more information, see the [Series Notes](#).

Series 4, General Correspondence, 1697-1799

The largest series in the George Washington papers consists of 297 volumes containing original letters to and from Washington. Also included are early family papers, speeches, military orders, farm reports, and other papers. Since Washington preserved drafts of his letters, and made letterbook copies of both outgoing and incoming correspondence, his letters often exist in multiple versions.

Series 5, Financial Papers, 1750-1796

Ledgers, journals, account books, cash books, pocket books, receipts, invoices, and business correspondence filling thirty-four volumes. These document the finances of Washington's public and private life; his plantation at Mount Vernon, including the slaves who lived and worked there; his military service during the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War; his presidency, and his retirement. The financial papers also contain many detailed pieces of information about the family members, neighbors, servants and other employees, slaves, doctors, merchants, and tradespeople he dealt with. For more information, see the [Series Notes](#).

Series 6, Military Papers, 1755-1798

A miscellaneous collection of twenty-six volumes dating from the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, and the Quasi-War with France. With the exception of an orderly book Washington kept as an aide to General Edward Braddock during the French and Indian War and a Virginia Militia memorandum book, these are volumes that Washington accumulated during his military career but did not create himself. Most document the Revolutionary War and include orderly books, including some captured from the British; interrogations of British deserters, lists of officers and provisions, court martial proceedings of Captain Richard Lippincott, diaries, copies of letters, and a few published volumes of military strategy. For more information, see the [Series Notes](#).

Series 7, Applications for Office, 1789-1796

Thirty-two volumes containing letters Washington received from job-seekers while he was president of the United States.

Series 8, Miscellaneous Papers, ca. 1775-1799

The items in Series 8 are not different in substance from manuscripts elsewhere in Washington's papers. They were filed separately only because they arrived at the library separately from the bulk of Washington's papers. They include correspondence and miscellaneous notes, 1757-1799; military commissions, honorary degrees, and other certificates, 1775-1798; survey warrants, 1750-1752; and notes Washington made on his reading, ca. 1760-1799. For more information, see the [Series Notes](#).

Series 9, Addenda, ca. 1732-1943

Washington material acquired since 1970, organized by date of acquisition, and items that were removed from the first eight series as extraneous.

Transcriptions Included on this Website

Some of Washington's papers are supplemented on this website by transcriptions from the published editions listed below. There are some discrepancies in date and text between documents in these published editions and the manuscript images. This is because in some cases editors of the published editions used a different draft than the one the Library of Congress owns. In other cases archivists at the Library of Congress and editors of the published editions arrived at different interpretations of dates, correspondents, or other data. With the exception of Jackson and Twohig's edition of the *Diaries*, these are older editions, used because they are out of copyright or otherwise in the public domain. For citations to modern editions of Washington's papers, see the bibliography in [Related Resources](#).

- Fitzpatrick, John C., ed. *The Writings of Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, 39 vols. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944.
- Fitzpatrick, John C., ed. *George Washington's Accounts of Expenses While Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, 1775-1783*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917.
- Hamilton, Stanislaus Murray, ed. *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, 5 vols. Boston: Society of Colonial Dames of America; New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company; Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1898.
- Jackson, Donald, and Dorothy Twohig, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington*, 6 vols. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976-1979. This edition is presented in Series 1 in two forms: facsimiles of published pages, and searchable text. The searchable text contains updates to the editors' annotations and notes that are not in the published version. These updates were provided by the editors of *The Diaries* at the University of Virginia's [Papers of George Washington External](#) publication project.

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Washington's Farewell Address 1796

https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp

Friends and Citizens:

The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the executive government of the United States being not far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made.

I beg you, at the same time, to do me the justice to be assured that this resolution has not been taken without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation which binds a dutiful citizen to his country; and that in withdrawing the tender of service, which silence in my situation might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest, no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness, but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in, the office to which your suffrages have twice called me have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly

hoped that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety, and am persuaded, whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that, in the present circumstances of our country, you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say that I have, with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious in the outset of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience in my own eyes, perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself; and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe that, while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

In looking forward to the moment which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country for the many honors it has conferred upon me; still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me; and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment, by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that under circumstances in which the passions, agitated in every direction, were liable to mislead, amidst appearances sometimes dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging, in situations in which not unfrequently want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism, the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts, and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave, as a strong incitement to unceasing vows that heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence; that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual; that the free Constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained; that its administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and virtue; that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these States, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete by so careful a preservation

and so prudent a use of this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare, which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger, natural to that solicitude, urge me, on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all-important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The unity of government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so, for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee that, from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens, by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together; the independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint counsels, and joint efforts of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest. Here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the union of the whole.

The North, in an unrestrained intercourse with the South, protected by the equal laws of a common government, finds in the productions of the latter great additional resources of maritime and commercial enterprise and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The South, in the same intercourse, benefiting by the agency of the North, sees its agriculture grow and its commerce expand. Turning partly into its own channels the seamen of the North, it finds its particular navigation invigorated; and, while it contributes, in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the national navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a maritime strength, to which itself is unequally adapted. The East, in a like intercourse with the West, already finds, and in the progressive improvement of interior communications by land and water, will more and more find a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad, or manufactures at home. The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort, and, what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest as one nation. Any other tenure by which the West can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength, or from an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.

While, then, every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and, what is of inestimable value, they must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighboring countries not tied together by the same governments, which their own rival ships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence, likewise, they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty. In this sense it is that your union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind, and exhibit the continuance of the Union as a primary object of patriotic desire. Is there a doubt whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation in such a case were criminal. We are authorized to hope that a proper organization of the whole

with the auxiliary agency of governments for the respective subdivisions, will afford a happy issue to the experiment. It is well worth a fair and full experiment. With such powerful and obvious motives to union, affecting all parts of our country, while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those who in any quarter may endeavor to weaken its bands.

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as matter of serious concern that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by geographical discriminations, Northern and Southern, Atlantic and Western; whence designing men may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heartburnings which spring from these misrepresentations; they tend to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection. The inhabitants of our Western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head; they have seen, in the negotiation by the Executive, and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate, of the treaty with Spain, and in the universal satisfaction at that event, throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them of a policy in the General Government and in the Atlantic States unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi; they have been witnesses to the formation of two treaties, that with Great Britain, and that with Spain, which secure to them everything they could desire, in respect to our foreign relations, towards confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the Union by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them from their brethren and connect them with aliens?

To the efficacy and permanency of your Union, a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliance, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute; they must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a constitution of government better calculated than your former for an intimate union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This government, the offspring of our own choice, uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power

and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put, in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill-concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common counsels and modified by mutual interests.

However combinations or associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

Towards the preservation of your government, and the permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretexts. One method of assault may be to effect, in the forms of the Constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system, and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of governments as of other human institutions; that experience is the surest standard by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country; that facility in changes, upon the credit of mere hypothesis and opinion, exposes to perpetual change, from the endless variety of hypothesis and opinion; and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interests, in a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigor as is consistent with the perfect security of liberty is indispensable. Liberty itself will find in such a government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian. It is, indeed, little else than a name, where the government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the society within the limits prescribed by the laws, and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the State, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let

me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but, in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight), the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true; and in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of public opinion, to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power,

and proneness to abuse it, which predominates in the human heart, is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositaries, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern; some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit, which the use can at any time yield.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

Promote then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible, avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it, avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertion in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should co-operate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should

practically bear in mind that towards the payment of debts there must be revenue; that to have revenue there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant; that the intrinsic embarrassment, inseparable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties), ought to be a decisive motive for a candid construction of the conduct of the government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue, which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

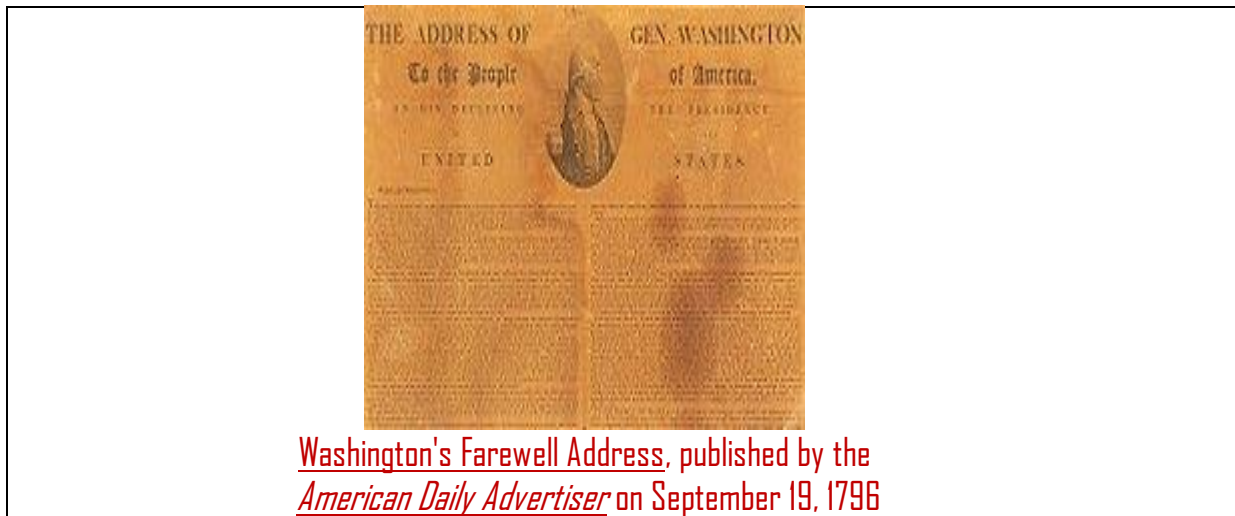
Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be, that good policy does not equally enjoin it - It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it ? Can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue ? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its vices?

In the execution of such a plan, nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded; and that, in place of them, just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The nation which indulges towards another a habitual hatred or a habitual fondness is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence, frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed, and bloody contests. The nation, prompted by ill-will and resentment, sometimes impels to war the government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity, and adopts through passion what reason would reject; at other times it makes the animosity of the nation subservient to projects of hostility instigated by pride, ambition, and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the liberty, of nations, has been the victim.

So likewise, a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained, and by exciting jealousy, ill-will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld. And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite

nation), facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity; gilding, with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.

As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practice the arts of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils. Such an attachment of a small or weak towards a great and powerful nation dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.



Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence, she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people under an efficient government. the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality, we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rival ship, interest, humor or caprice?

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But, in my opinion, it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying by gentle means the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing (with powers so disposed, in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the government to support them) conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit, but temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another; that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character; that, by such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favors, and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion, which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish; that they will control the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from

running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations. But, if I may even flatter myself that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism; this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated.

How far in the discharge of my official duties I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public records and other evidences of my conduct must witness to you and to the world. To myself, the assurance of my own conscience is, that I have at least believed myself to be guided by them.

In relation to the still subsisting war in Europe, my proclamation of the twenty-second of April, 1793, is the index of my plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice, and by that of your representatives in both houses of Congress, the spirit of that measure has continually governed me, uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert me from it.

After deliberate examination, with the aid of the best lights I could obtain, I was well satisfied that our country, under all the circumstances of the case, had a right to take, and was bound in duty and interest to take, a neutral position. Having taken it, I determined, as far as should depend upon me, to maintain it, with moderation, perseverance, and firmness.

The considerations which respect the right to hold this conduct, it is not necessary on this occasion to detail. I will only observe that, according to my understanding of the matter, that right, so far from being denied by any of the belligerent powers, has been virtually admitted by all.

The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without anything more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity towards other nations.

The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me a predominant motive has been to endeavor to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

Though, in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence; and that, after forty five years of my life dedicated to its

service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it, which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations, I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow-citizens, the benign influence of good laws under a free government, the ever-favorite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labors, and dangers.



Ferry Farm, the Washington family residence on the Rappahannock River in Stafford County, Virginia, where Washington spent much of his youth



***The Washington Family*, a late 18th century portrait by Edward Savage depicting George and Martha Washington with her grandchildren and an unnamed enslaved man**



An 1855 engraving of then Lieutenant Colonel Washington holding night council during the Battle of Fort Mifflin in Fayette County, Pennsylvania



***Washington the Soldier*, an 1834 portrait of Washington on horseback during the Battle of the Monongahela**



***General Washington, Commander of the Continental Army*, a 1776 portrait by Charles Willson Peale**



Washington arriving in Boston on July 2, 1775, to take command of the Continental Army



Battle of Long Island, an 1858 painting by Alonzo Chappel



The Passage of the Delaware, an 1819 portrait by Thomas Sully



The Capture of the Hessians at Trenton, December 26, 1776, a John Trumbull portrait depicting the Battle of Trenton



Washington and Lafayette at Valley Forge, a 1907 portrait by John Ward Dunsmore



Washington Rallying the Troops at Monmouth, an 1854 portrait by Emanuel Leutze depicting Washington at the Battle of Monmouth



Generals Washington and Rochambeau give final orders before launching the Siege of Yorktown in Yorktown, Virginia in September 1781.



General George Washington Resigning His Commission, an 1824 portrait by John Trumbull



Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States, a 1940 portrait by Howard Chandler Christy depicting Washington as the presiding officer at the Constitutional Convention in 1787



President's House in Philadelphia, where both Washington and then John Adams worked and resided until completion of the White House in 1800



Washington reviews the troops near Fort Cumberland, Maryland, before their march to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion in Western Pennsylvania



***Battle of Fallen Timbers*, an 1896 portrait by Rufus Fairchild Zogbaum depicting the final battle of the Northwest Indian War**



Portrait of the USS *Constitution*, commissioned and named by President Washington in 1794

The Washington Cabinet

Office	Name	Term
<u>President</u>	George Washington	1789–1797
<u>Vice President</u>	<u>John Adams</u>	1789–1797
<u>Secretary of State</u>	<u>John Jay</u> (acting)	1789–1790
	<u>Thomas Jefferson</u>	1790–1793
	<u>Edmund Randolph</u>	1794–1795
	<u>Timothy Pickering</u>	1795–1797
<u>Secretary of the Treasury</u>	<u>Alexander Hamilton</u>	1789–1795
	<u>Oliver Wolcott Jr.</u>	1795–1797
<u>Secretary of War</u>	<u>Henry Knox</u>	1789–1794
	<u>Timothy Pickering</u>	1795
	<u>James McHenry</u>	1796–1797
<u>Attorney General</u>	<u>Edmund Randolph</u>	1789–1794
	<u>William Bradford</u>	1794–1795
	<u>Charles Lee</u>	1795–1797



Washington on his Deathbed, an 1851 portrait by [Junius Brutus Stearns](#)



Washington the Farmer at Mount Vernon, an 1851 portrait by [Junius Brutus Stearns](#)



The Washington Monument



**Shrine of Democracy,
Mount Rushmore National Memorial**

Currency and Postage

Washington appears on contemporary U.S. currency, including the [one-dollar bill](#), the [Presidential one-dollar coin](#) and the [quarter-dollar coin](#) (the [Washington quarter](#)). Washington and [Benjamin Franklin](#) appeared on the [nation's first postage stamps](#) in 1847. Washington has since appeared on many postage issues, more than any other person.



Washington on the 2009 dollar bill

Eulogy

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/biographies/george-washington>

On December 14, 1799, George Washington, the first President of the United States, died at his home in Mount Vernon, Virginia. Congress commissioned Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee a fellow Virginian, army veteran, and friend to pen an appropriate eulogy. In 3,500 words, Lee attempted to encapsulate one of the most influential Founding Fathers. He wrote that Washington was the:

"First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Before he was this influential leader, Washington was the son of a wealthy Virginian land speculator. He was born on February 22, 1732, and received little formal education in his youth. After his father's death in 1743, he inherited a large farm, with ten slaves to work the property, and became a land surveyor. In 1750, he resigned his position to devote himself to farming and acquiring new farmland.

Two years later, inspired by his recently deceased brother Lawrence's military service, Washington joined the Virginian Militia. He was given the rank of major and appointed to command one of the four militia districts in Virginia. His enlistment occurred as tensions between France and England ignited. British officials ordered Washington to force the French army off "British" land and Washington impressed his superiors by making a treacherous winter round-trip 77-day trek to the French Fort Le Boeuf to inform France of these commands. When France refused to comply, Washington was given the honor to force their hand. Unfortunately, he attacked the French during the Battle of Jumonville Glen, also known as the Jumonville affair, and the French commander Joseph Coulon de Jumonville died. A month later, South Carolinian militia joined Washington and the militia again tried to attack French fortifications but were unsuccessful. This incident led to the French and Indian War, also known as the Seven Years' War. In response, Washington surrendered his troops and resigned his commission with essential military knowledge that proved vital later in his career.

After leaving the militia, Washington married the wealthy widow Martha Dandridge Custis on January 6, 1759. This marriage gave Washington land, wealth, and status as he transitioned into a gentleman farmer in the Virginian countryside. In addition, he became active in local politics during the preceding decades. When the "shot heard round the world" was fired in the Battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, Washington set off to join other delegates in Philadelphia to attend the Continental Congress.

Several months later, when the Continental Army was officially formed to combat the British, Washington was unanimously elected as its commander. For the next eight years, Washington fought the British. Throughout this time, he only spent ten days at his

Virginia home and suffered along with his men in the chilly New England winters and warm Southern summers. Only after General Charles Cornwallis surrendered after the Siege of Yorktown in October 1781 and the Treaty of Paris was signed in September 1783, did Washington resign his command and return to his home in Mount Vernon. Once there, he hoped to resume his life as a Virginia gentleman farmer.

However, the Articles of Confederation that were established after the Revolutionary War were weak in ruling the newly established United States of America. With a lack of central government, the country struggled to pay veterans, levy taxes, or make any changes in the political landscape. The Continental Congress met again to revise the plans and asked George Washington to be in attendance. When a new constitution was established, the need for a "president" of the United States was evident. George Washington, the former military commander, and public figure was the perfect candidate and he accepted. For the next eight years, Washington served tirelessly as the first president of the United States. Then, in an unprecedented move at a time when political leaders usually served for life, Washington retired. With this last act, he helped the blooming democracy to move on and form a new nation.

Lee was apt when he described Washington: he was the "first in war," when he served as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army; "first in peace," when he lead his country through its turbulent first years as President of the United States; and "first in the hearts of his countrymen," when he helped the country become the democracy it is today.

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<https://www.gwu.edu/about>

George Washington University

Mission Statement

The Board of Trustees recently reviewed the university's mission, seeking a reimagined, focused statement that articulates the George Washington University's primary role. Ultimately, the Board found the best inspiration hiding in plain sight in GW's founding document—its Congressional Charter:

The mission of the George Washington University is to educate individuals in liberal arts, languages, sciences, learned professions, and other courses and subjects of study, and to conduct scholarly research and publish the findings of such research.

Since our capital city's first days, people have travelled here for many reasons. They come to explore the past and to chart new futures. They come to ask questions and to seek expert answers. They come to start discourse and to remember in silence. They come to demand change and to be that change. They come to grow. They come to learn. They come to make history and join the ranks alongside many [monumental GW alumni](#).

They don't just want to do a community service project. They want to meet, and then exceed, a service challenge from the First Lady of the United States.

And they don't just want to take an engineering course. They want to conduct [research](#) in a stunning new core lab facility with faculty who are quite literally shaping the world of tomorrow.

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<https://encyclopediaofvirginia.org/entries/washington-george-1732-1799/>

George Washington served as commander in chief of the Continental army during the American Revolution (1775-1783), as president of the United States Constitutional Convention (1787), and as first president of the United States (1789-1797). Born to a family of middling wealth, Washington's formal education ended when he was about fifteen. Thanks to his half-brother's marriage into the wealthy Fairfax family, Washington acquired social polish, a taste for aristocratic living, and connections to [Virginia](#)'s political elite. Long months on the frontier as a surveyor toughened the young Washington, preparing him for service in Virginia's militia during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). He held positions of command at a remarkably young age. Marriage to Martha Custis brought him great wealth. Increasingly restive under British taxation and trade restrictions, Washington took



a leading role in the nascent revolutionary movement after British regulars killed colonists and seized private property at the battles of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts in April 1775. As commander in chief, he led American forces for the entire eight-year war, losing more battles than he won but managing to keep the army together under the most difficult circumstances. By the middle of the war, he was already hailed as the "Father of His Country." His enormous prestige after the war led to his being chosen to lead the Constitutional Convention and to his election as first president.

## Early Years

### Washington as a Young Man

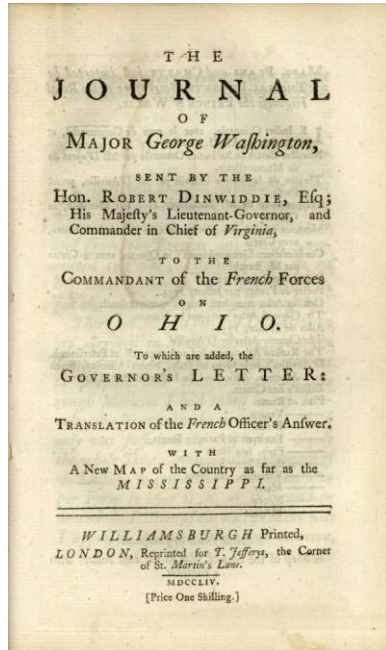
Washington was born on February 22, 1732, at Popes Creek farm in Westmoreland County on the Northern Neck. (By the [Julian, or Old Style, calendar](#), in effect in England until 1752, he was born on February 11.) His father, Augustine Washington, owned nearly 3,000 acres of [tobacco](#) land (including the site of Mount Vernon, overlooking the Potomac River) and properties containing iron ore, while managing an iron furnace for an English company. After the death of his first wife, Augustine Washington married Mary Ball, whose first child was George.

When Washington was six his family moved to Ferry Farm, across the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg. His older half-brothers, Lawrence and Austin, studied in England, but the death of Augustine Washington when George was eleven eliminated his chance for schooling abroad. He had an irregular education under different schoolmasters and tutors, and learned the basics of surveying. Many years later, John Adams directed an ungenerous remark at Washington, disparaging the first president as "too illiterate, unread, unlearned for his station." Washington himself [admitted](#) to his "consciousness of a defective education."

Washington came under the patronage of the wealthy and powerful Fairfax family after Lawrence Washington married Ann Fairfax, daughter of William Fairfax, who resided in the splendid Belvoir mansion not far from Mount Vernon. The family controlled the five-million-acre Fairfax Grant stretching from the tip of the Northern Neck into the Shenandoah Valley [backcountry](#). In 1748, at age sixteen, Washington accompanied Fairfax's surveyors on a month-long trek through the [Shenandoah](#). At seventeen he was appointed official surveyor for Culpeper County. In the next several years he acquired approximately 9,000 acres of land.

In 1751, Washington made his only journey outside the continent, traveling to Barbados with Lawrence Washington, who was seeking relief from tuberculosis. There Washington survived a case of smallpox, gaining immunity to a disease that became epidemic during the Revolution. It is often said that this dose of smallpox rendered him sterile, but the only modern medical study of smallpox and male infertility found no correlation between the two.

## The Seven Years War



In 1752, Virginia lieutenant governor [Robert Dinwiddie](#), guided by a recommendation by the Fairfax family, appointed the twenty-year-old Washington a district adjutant of the Virginia militia, with the rank of major. The following year Dinwiddie dispatched Washington, with only six frontiersmen at his side, to demand the departure of a French military force in the Ohio country, a region claimed by Britain (and prominent Virginia land speculators). The journey, conducted in winter, proved an arduous one, as the French could not be located at first, requiring Washington to push farther and farther through forests and swamps. On the way he parleyed at a council of the Six Nations of the Iroquois at Logstown in Pennsylvania, though the chiefs were not impressed by the tiny English force. Similarly rebuffed when he located a French officer at Venango, Pennsylvania, he dutifully pushed on almost as far

as Lake Erie.

Though the French rejected Dinwiddie's ultimatum, Washington returned to Williamsburg with valuable intelligence about the capability of their forces. In 1754 Washington set out with about 140 men for the Forks of the Ohio. In a brief skirmish the Virginians and their Indian allies killed several French soldiers and their commander, Joseph Jumonville, in an incident portrayed as an assassination by the French. The firefight in the woods elated Washington, who [wrote](#) to his brother, "I can with truth assure you, I heard Bullets whistle and believe me there is something charming in the sound." The firefight also ignited the French and Indian War.

Not long after the Jumonville incident, Washington and his regiment were attacked at Fort Necessity and forced to surrender. Despite the defeat, Washington won the approbation of the [lieutenant governor](#), and his men received official [praise](#) from the [House of Burgesses](#) "for their late gallant and brave Behaviour in the Defense of their Country." The following spring, General Edward Braddock led an army of British regulars against the French, with Washington serving on Braddock's staff as a volunteer aide. The expedition ended in disaster when Braddock's 1,700-man column of regulars and militiamen was ambushed and routed by a smaller contingent of French soldiers and Indian allies. "We have been most scandalously beaten by a trifling body of men," Washington [wrote](#). In the midst of the fray he took "4 bullets through my coat" and had "Two Horses shot [from] under me." Braddock was killed.

This engagement gave rise to the legend that the British had been slaughtered because Braddock refused to take Washington's advice to break ranks and fight as irregulars, "Indian-style." As the historian Edward G. Lengel has pointed out, the disaster resulted not from overly rigid discipline but from the collapse of discipline under fire. "Those who stood in formation like the Virginians," Lengel noted, "had more success in fending off the attackers."

## Washington During the French and Indian War

Dinwiddie appointed Washington commander in chief of all militia forces in Virginia with authority over about fifty officers, many of them older and more experienced than Washington. He raised a fresh regiment, established supply lines, and conducted a three-year campaign along a 350-mile frontier defending against, in his words, "the cruel Incursions of a Crafty Savage Enemy." On the frontier, Washington honed the iron discipline that he imposed for the rest of his life on himself and on others. On one occasion he ordered a mass execution of deserters, but relented and hanged only two. He also squabbled with Dinwiddie, whose support he found fickle, and irritated the British chain of command by forcefully pushing his own plans while deriding those of superior officers. As Lengel observes: "Some unattractive facets of Washington's personality arose during the French and Indian War, and they would continue to mark his conduct twenty years later. Highly sensitive and easily hurt, he sometimes overreacted to his military, political, or social failures by lashing out at perceived enemies, or by falling into a despondency that made him yearn for the simplicity of farm life ... only action could raise his spirits."

About this time a comrade set down a description of Washington: Straight as an [Indian](#), measuring six feet two inches in his stockings and weighing 175 pounds ... His frame is padded with well-developed muscles, indicating great strength ... A pleasing and benevolent though a commanding countenance, dark brown hair which he wears in a cue. His mouth is large and generally firmly closed, but which from time to time discloses some defective teeth ... In conversation he looks you full in the face, is deliberate, deferential, and engaging. His demeanor at all times composed and dignified. His movements and gestures are graceful, his walk majestic, and he is a splendid horseman.

## **Marriage, Politics, and the Run-Up to War**

In 1758 Washington courted the rich young widow Martha Dandridge Custis. Her wealth came from her marriage to [Daniel Parke Custis](#), whose death in 1757 had left twenty-six-year-old Custis with two small children and an estate worth approximately £30,000. Washington and Custis married at a Custis house on the Pamunkey River on January 6, 1759. At his earliest opportunity Washington [wrote to the Custis agent in London](#) giving notice of his taking over management of the estate, "as by Marriage I am entitled to a third part of that estate, and Invested likewise with the care of the other two thirds," namely, the shares of Custis's children [John Parke \(Jacky\)](#) and Martha Parke (Patsy). The Custis lands under Washington's control amounted to nearly 20,000 acres in six counties. After a brief honeymoon in Williamsburg the couple settled at Washington's Mount Vernon plantation.

The couple had no children, but Washington doted on his young stepchildren. Jacky Custis, indolent, willful, and spoiled by his mother, resisted Washington's attempts to instill discipline. Though a poor student, he enrolled at King's College in New York (later Columbia University), but abandoned his schooling to get married. Washington's stepdaughter, Patsy, suffered from epilepsy and succumbed to a seizure in 1773. Her death reduced Martha Washington "to the lowest ebb of Misery."

Elected to the House of Burgesses in 1758 (on his third try), Washington also served as a county magistrate and a [parish](#) vestryman. He grew increasingly irritated as he realized that Mount Vernon's business affairs were, to a certain extent, governed in

London. His British merchants charged high prices for second-rate goods and failed to obtain the best prices for his tobacco. Trade regulations forbade him from buying high-quality Portuguese salt to pack his fish, compelling him to purchase a British product. Though his finances had been enormously improved by his marriage, Washington soon outspent the income from the Custis estate, borrowing at high interest rates to acquire both necessities and luxury goods. He switched from growing tobacco to wheat partly to break free of his dependence on the British market and reduce his debt. The only market for tobacco was in England, but wheat could be sold in America.

When Parliament passed the Stamp Act in 1765, imposing a tax on every sheet of official paper and every newspaper, the colonies seethed, but Washington predicted it would be repealed if enough planters and lawyers defied it. If lawyers refused to buy tax stamps to affix to their legal papers, then no papers could be filed and court proceedings would halt, with the heaviest losers being British merchants suing for debts. As Washington had foreseen, the government revoked the Stamp Act when merchants complained that it cost them colonial revenue.

Parliament's enactment of the Townshend Revenue Act in 1767, imposing new levies on colonists, stirred Washington to support a boycott of British goods. The following year a British military force landed in Boston, Massachusetts, to compel compliance with the Townshend Acts. As relations between the colonies and the mother country grew worse, Washington raised the possibility that the inhabitants of America might have to take up arms. In a letter to [George Mason](#) in 1769 Washington wrote: "At a time when our lordly Masters in Great Britain will be satisfied with nothing less than the deprecation of American freedom, it seems highly necessary that something should be done to avert the stroke and maintain the liberty which we have derived from our Ancestors."

In 1774 Washington predicted that if war with Great Britain broke out, "more blood [would] be spilt [than] history has ever yet furnished instances of in the annals of North America." By the winter of 1775 he was drilling the Fairfax County militia for a possible confrontation. An English traveler wrote that the 150 men under Washington's command made "a formidable appearance." Amid "utmost confusion," the traveler described patriot committees seizing and reading foreign mail, intimidating tradesmen to stop buying British goods, and harassing suspected loyalists, who "have been tarred and feathered, others had their property burnt and destroyed by the populace."

### **Selection of Washington as Commander in Chief**

When news reached Virginia in April 1775 that shots had been fired at Lexington and Concord, Washington wrote to his friend George William Fairfax, a loyalist, "you must, undoubtedly, have received an Account of the engagement in the Massachusetts Bay ... General [Thomas] Gage [the British commander] acknowledges, that the detachment ... was sent out to destroy private property; or, in other Words, to destroy a Magazine which self-preservation obliged the Inhabitants to establish ... Unhappy it is ... to reflect, that a Brother's Sword has been sheathed in a Brother's breast, and that, the once happy and peaceful plains of America are either to be drenched with Blood or Inhabited by Slaves. Sad alternative! But can a virtuous Man hesitate in his choice?"

Washington traveled to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the Second Continental Congress in May 1775 wearing his military uniform. After the [delegates](#) elected him commander in chief on the first ballot, Washington departed for Massachusetts to take charge of the Continental army at Cambridge. In a farewell letter to his wife he said he



expected to be home for Christmas. In another letter he wrote, "I am now embarked on a tempestuous ocean, from, whence, perhaps, no friendly harbor is to be found."

## Revolutionary War



Upon his arrival in Cambridge in July 1775, Washington found only 14,000 men instead of the 20,000 he had expected. Powder was short, as were tents, clothing, tools, and funds—all together an "exceedingly dangerous" situation in his estimation. Impatient at keeping the British army penned up in Boston, Washington proposed a frontal assault to dislodge the enemy, but his senior officers dissuaded him. Very likely such an attack would have resulted in disaster for the Americans. Washington won a great and bloodless victory in March 1776 when he forced the British to evacuate Boston by placing artillery in a commanding position atop Dorchester Heights.

After driving the British from Boston, Washington was ordered by Congress to defend New York,

where the British landed a powerful invasion force that dealt Washington a disastrous defeat in a series of battles between August and November of 1776. Washington barely escaped with his army into New Jersey. With popular support for the war waning rapidly in the autumn of 1776 and enlistments about to expire, Washington gambled on a bold stroke, crossing the ice-choked Delaware River for a successful surprise attack on the Hessian outpost at Trenton, New Jersey, on December 26. He followed this victory with a thrust at Princeton, New Jersey, on January 3, 1777.

## Washington as a Military Commander During the Revolution

Washington's record as a field commander is decidedly mixed, and scholars still debate his qualities as a general, reflecting disagreements evident in Washington's time. Dissatisfied with Washington's leadership and seeking command for himself, the English-born general Charles Lee proposed to Congress that the army adopt guerrilla tactics. As historian John Shy writes, Lee "sought a war that would use the new light-infantry tactics already in vogue among the military avant-garde of Europe, the same tactics the free men at Lexington and Concord had instinctively employed." To Washington, however, "this was all madness. He never seriously considered resorting to a war of guerrilla bands drawn from the militia ... A strategy of that kind would change the war for independence into a genuine civil war with all its grisly attendants—ambush, reprisal, counter-reprisal. It would tear the fabric of American life to pieces."

Washington also faced demands from Congress that he engage the British in a major battle that would quickly decide the war. Washington replied, "we should on all occasions avoid a general action or put anything to the risk, unless compelled by necessity, into

which we ought never to be drawn." His aim, he said, was to "protract the war" until the British wearied of it.

In September 1777 the British soundly beat Washington at the Battle of Brandywine in Pennsylvania, an engagement that his biographer [Douglas Southall Freeman](#) said Washington conducted "as if he had been in a daze." On October 4, Washington led 8,000 Continentals and 3,000 militia in a surprise attack on 9,000 British regulars camped at Germantown in Pennsylvania, trying to follow a complicated plan of coordinated maneuvers by different columns. But when a dense fog descended, the American units collided and fired on each other. What had promised to be an American victory dissolved into a panic-stricken rout.

Nevertheless, Washington's boldness and determination echoed across the Atlantic. The biographer James Thomas Flexner wrote: "In Europe, it seemed almost inconceivable that an untrained rabble would attack a mighty regular army so effectively and so soon after they had been defeated." In October 1777, American general Horatio Gates captured a British army under General John Burgoyne at Saratoga, New York—an enormous victory that stunned Europe and helped convince the French to enter the war on the American side the following spring. But in the meantime, Washington and his men had to endure a harrowing winter.

Washington took his tattered army of 10,000 into winter quarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, in December 1777. Over the next six months some 2,000 soldiers died of disease, starvation, and exposure. Ragged clothes were stripped from corpses and reissued to the living. Despite the horrors of that winter, the spirit of the army remained strong, a fact many historians have attributed to Washington's leadership.

Washington's army emerged from Valley Forge stronger in several respects. Early in the war, Washington had banned all blacks from his army, then very quickly countermanded that order and accepted free blacks in 1776. At Valley Forge, desperate for manpower, Washington gave approval to recruit black troops in Rhode Island. Recognizing the pernicious effects of segregation in a fighting force, he ordered that black and white troops be mixed in the same units: "so arrange and model them, as to level the Regiments ... abolish the name and appearance of a Black Corps."

Washington's circle of officers had been augmented the previous summer by the arrival of [Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette](#), a French aristocrat burning with admiration for the cause of liberty. He was given command of a division of Virginia troops. The Prussian drill master Friedrich Wilhelm Augustus von Steuben arrived at Valley Forge in February. His drills in the battlefield maneuvers of Europe transformed the army, as did fresh rations of food, clothing, and equipment, and the official announcement in May 1778 that France had joined the American side. Steuben's training stiffened the army's discipline and resolve at the Battle of Monmouth, New Jersey, in June 1778. With the Americans fleeing in disorder, Washington exposed himself to enemy fire to rally his retreating troops, extracting a draw from looming defeat. The Battle of Monmouth was the last major engagement in the North as the British shifted their attentions south.

In May 1781, after six years of fighting, Washington assessed "our prospects" as "bewildered and gloomy." In his journal he noted, "Instead of having Magazines filled with provisions, we have a scanty pittance ... Instead of having our Arsenals well supplied with Military Stores, they are poorly provided." The states had sent him only a small fraction of the troops they had promised. But in August 1781 he received word that the British general Charles Cornwallis, first marquess Cornwallis, had established a base at

Yorktown, Virginia, on the York River, which empties into the Chesapeake Bay. Simultaneously, a French fleet was sailing toward the Chesapeake. Encamped outside New York, Washington ordered a fast march south and trapped Cornwallis, who surrendered on October 19, 1781. The major fighting of the Revolutionary War ended at Yorktown, though two years passed before a peace treaty was signed.

### **Constitutional Convention and Presidency**

The retirement from public life that Washington so deeply yearned for did not last. The Articles of Confederation had established a weak federal government for the United States of America, and Washington was among those who came to fear that the blessings of independence would prove evanescent. "What a triumph for the advocates of despotism," he said, "to find that we are incapable of governing ourselves, and that systems founded on the basis of equal liberty are merely ideal and fallacious!" He took note that "respectable characters speak of a monarchical form of government without horror." Shays' Rebellion (1786–1787), an armed revolt by debt-stricken Massachusetts farmers, sent shudders of alarm through the country when the rebels attacked a government arsenal and forced a halt to debt collections for several months. With "combustibles in every State," Washington feared, "we are fast verging to anarchy and confusion." Elected head of the Virginia delegation to a convention in Philadelphia to revise the Articles, on the day of his departure from Mount Vernon in May 1787 he suffered a sudden, debilitating headache, which biographer John Ferling describes as a sign of "a severe case of raw nerves."

### **Washington's Decision to Take on the Presidency**

Chosen to be president of the convention, Washington occupied, both literally and figuratively, an august position. The historian Max Farrand described Washington as almost a godlike figure: "He sat on a raised platform; in a large, carved, high-backed chair, from which his commanding figure and dignified bearing exerted a potent influence on the assembly." Washington's direct influence on the formation of the Constitution can only be a matter of speculation, because as president of the convention he did not participate in the debates. But there can be little doubt that behind the scenes he exerted his influence to shape a strong central government. Inevitably, a clamor arose for him to become the first president of the newly constituted nation. The office, after all, had been tailored for him specifically. As Pierce Butler of South Carolina said, the delegates at the Constitutional convention had "cast their eyes toward General Washington as President and shaped their ideas of the powers to be given to a President, by their opinions of his virtue."

Washington dreaded assuming the presidency, and his two terms were filled with acrimony and punctuated by civil strife. The British refused to vacate their western forts and instigated Indian assaults on the U.S. frontier. Spain held the Mississippi. The French Revolution (1789–1799) stirred fears of violent mob action on these shores. The national and state governments faced bankruptcy from war debts—debts held largely by wealthy speculators whose interest payments had to be met by taxes that fell largely on farmers and workers, arousing bitter class conflict. A new federal excise tax provoked Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion (1791–1794), an event easy to mischaracterize as a colorful uprising of moonshiners when it was actually an armed backcountry revolt against a crippling levy on a vital agricultural commodity. To suppress the rebellion, Washington called out a military force equal in size to the army he led against the British Crown.



Almost everything he did in office set a precedent. "I walk on untrodden ground," Washington wrote. "There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent." Respecting the separation of powers, he refrained from meddling in the legislative process and used his veto only twice. He guarded executive power, refusing a congressional request to share diplomatic instructions, declaring them to be privileged communications of the president. To grant Congress the right to examine "all the Papers respecting a negotiation with a foreign power, would be to establish a dangerous precedent."

Washington used every tool at his disposal to win passage of a treaty that John Jay, the first chief justice of the United States, had negotiated with Great Britain in an episode that illuminates the murderous political passions of that supposedly tranquil era. To counter violent protests against the treaty, Washington used intermediaries to orchestrate a national outpouring of Federalist supporters in a public relations campaign stressing Washington's character, patriotism, and good judgment. He thus pioneered the "hidden-hand" methods often attributed to U.S. president Dwight D. Eisenhower. Taking the public pulse by eavesdropping on conversations in country taverns, a Federalist operative reported that the "yeomanry" had become convinced that "the President will not see the country wronged, much less wrong it himself," and he exulted at finding "confidence in, and almost adoration of the President." The campaign rode to success on a cult of personality that masked bitter partisan divisions. Just days after casting the tie-breaking vote in favor of appropriations for Jay's Treaty, the Speaker of the House was stabbed.

For his secretaries of war, state, and the treasury, the president appointed [future url="KnoxHenry"]Henry Knox, [Thomas Jefferson](#), and Alexander Hamilton. Jefferson, who came to lead a party known as the Republicans, opposed Washington's core philosophy of strong central government, while Hamilton—the emblematic Federalist—championed it, along with fiscal policies anathema to Jefferson, such as a national bank. Jefferson reviled Hamilton as a crypto-monarchist and a tool of the British. In the conflict between these two brilliant men, Washington sided with Hamilton, prompting Jefferson to spread stories of a wily Hamilton manipulating an increasingly senile president.

Despite Washington's great popularity, the seeds of Jefferson's 1800 electoral triumph were planted during Washington's administration, when a grassroots democratic movement sprang up in opposition to the Federalists, who unabashedly promoted rule by an educated, propertied elite. Always claiming to be above partisanship and portraying himself as the disinterested champion of American unity, Washington nonetheless stood at the head of a partisan faction destined to be rejected in 1800 by a deeply divided electorate. Jefferson lost the election of 1796 to the Federalist vice president, John Adams, very narrowly.

## Retirement

Washington returned to Mount Vernon with enormous relief and pleasure: "I think ... that the life of a Husbandman of all others is the most delectable. It is honorable. It is amusing, and, with judicious management, it is profitable ... delightful to an undebauched mind is the task of making improvements on the earth." In the forefront of scientific farming, Washington rotated crops, experimented with new ones, and bred some of the first mules in the country. He built an innovative threshing mill of his own design and a



whiskey distillery (as a high-volume producer, he qualified for a lower tax rate than the small-scale distillers who had risen in revolt). His slaves harvested fish from the Potomac for local sale and shipment to the West Indies.

During his long absences on public service, a constant stream of letters carried his detailed instructions to Mount Vernon's farm managers. Like Thomas Jefferson, another presidential plantation owner, Washington tried to manage from a distance, retaining an almost photographic mental image of his properties. In the 1780s Washington was so desperately short of cash that he could not pay his taxes and had to borrow money to get to his first inauguration in New York. Hordes of unwanted guests and curiosity seekers descended on him after the war and his presidency, imposing enormous expenses. Even though cash remained short, with his substantial landholdings Washington was unquestionably very wealthy.

Enslaved labor kept Mount Vernon going through the long war and the many difficulties that followed, and while Washington fed and housed his slaves poorly, his writings do not contain references to black people as being inferior to, or even different from, whites. Judging by his actions, by the end of the 1780s, a sense of slavery's injustice began to come over him. He looked for ways to "liberate" his slaves, but encountered opposition from the Custis family.

Washington died on December 14, 1799, from an acute throat infection that occluded his windpipe, causing a slow death. His final day was agonizing: "I die hard," he murmured, "but I am not afraid to go." On his deathbed he looked over two wills he had written. One he ordered burned; the will he chose to execute contained a long, detailed clause that freed all his slaves. He was laid to rest in a temporary tomb and then moved to an imposing above-ground mausoleum at Mount Vernon, where his wife and other family members would also lie. Martha Washington refused requests to have him buried in the national capital.

### **Washington's Death**

Hailed in a eulogy as "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," George Washington retains his place as the preeminent Founding Father. Born in Virginia, he transcended sectional divides and interests, acquiring a national perspective that made him the agent and the symbol of the American union, the "indispensable man," as one biographer called him, in the formation of the United States.

## **TIMELINE**

### **February 22, 1732**

George Washington is born at Popes Creek farm in Westmoreland County on the Northern Neck, the son of Augustine Washington and his second wife, Mary Ball Washington. By the Julian, or Old Style, calendar, in effect in England until 1752, Washington is born on February 11.

### **1748**

At the age of sixteen, George Washington accompanies surveyors working for William Fairfax on a month-long trek through the Shenandoah Valley.

### **1751**

George Washington makes his only journey outside North America, traveling to Barbados with his elder half-brother Lawrence Washington, who is seeking relief from tuberculosis. While in Barbados, Washington survives a case of smallpox, granting him a lifelong immunity to the disease.

**November 6, 1752**

Virginia lieutenant governor Robert Dinwiddie appoints George Washington a district adjutant of the Virginia militia, with the rank of major.

**October 31, 1753**

Lieutenant Governor Robert Dinwiddie dispatches George Washington, with only six frontiersmen at his side, to demand the departure of a French military force in the Ohio country, a region claimed by Britain.

**May 28, 1754**

Virginia militia, numbering about 140 men under the command of George Washington and allied with a number of Indians, skirmish with French forces in the Ohio country. Several French soldiers are killed, including their commander, Joseph Jumonville.

**July 3–4, 1754**

French forces under Louis Coulon de Villiers and their Indian allies defeat Virginia militia under George Washington and British regulars under James Mackay at the Battle of Fort Necessity in present-day Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

**May 10, 1755**

George Washington is appointed to serve as an aide to British general Edward Braddock.

**July 9, 1755**

At the Battle of Monongahela in Pennsylvania during the French and Indian War, George Washington acquits himself bravely even as French forces decisively rout the British, killing their commander, General Edward Braddock.

**August 14, 1755**

Virginia lieutenant governor Robert Dinwiddie appoints George Washington commander of Virginia forces during the French and Indian War.

**July 24, 1758**

On his third attempt at public office, George Washington is elected to the House of Burgesses, representing Frederick County in the Shenandoah Valley.

**January 6, 1759**

George Washington and Martha Dandridge Custis marry at a Custis house on the Pamunkey River. Custis is the widow of Daniel Parke Custis and brings to the marriage his large estate and her two children.

**February 10, 1763**

Great Britain, France, and Spain sign the Treaty of Paris, ending the Seven Years' War, known in North America as the French and Indian War.

**April 5, 1764**

Parliament passes the Sugar Act, which imposes new taxes on mainland imports, and increases the authority of vice admiralty courts to hand down decisions regarding customs violations without a jury.

**March 22, 1765**

Parliament passes the "Duties in American Colonies Act 1765," better known as the Stamp Act, a piece of legislation introduced by George Grenville, the British prime

minister. It requires all printed materials in the American colonies to be produced on specially stamped paper manufactured in London, England.

**March 18, 1766**

Parliament passes the Act Repealing the Stamp Act.

**March 18, 1766**

Parliament passes the Declaratory Act, asserting its authority to make binding law for the American colonies.

**June 29, 1767**

Parliament passes the Townshend Revenue Act, which taxes goods imported to the American colonies, such as paper, paint, lead, glass, and tea.

**October 1768**

A British military force lands in Boston, Massachusetts, to compel compliance with the Townshend Acts, a series of taxes on goods imported into the American colonies.

**September 5, 1774**

The First Continental Congress convenes in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Seven Virginia delegates are in attendance, including Richard Bland, Benjamin Harrison, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Edmund Pendleton, and George Washington.

**September 5—October 26, 1774**

The First Continental Congress meets at Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Fifty-six representatives of twelve of the thirteen English colonies in North America debate the means by which to protest British taxation.

**May 10, 1775**

The Second Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Representing Virginia throughout the Congress are Richard Bland, Benjamin Harrison, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Francis Lightfoot Lee, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Nelson Jr., Edmund Pendleton, Peyton Randolph, George Washington, and George Wythe.

**June 15, 1775**

The Second Continental Congress appoints George Washington commander in chief of the Continental army.

**July 3, 1775**

George Washington takes command of the Continental army at Cambridge, Massachusetts. The army numbers 14,000 men instead of the 20,000 Washington expects.

**March 17, 1776**

British forces evacuate Boston, Massachusetts, after George Washington places artillery in a commanding position atop Dorchester Heights.

**August 27—29, 1776**

British forces under William Howe, fifth viscount Howe, defeat George Washington and the Continental army at the Battle of Long Island in New York. A small flotilla evacuates the Americans from Brooklyn to Manhattan.

**September 12, 1776**

George Washington and the Continental army evacuate New York City.

**October 28, 1776**

British forces under William Howe, fifth viscount Howe, defeat George Washington and the Continental army at the Battle of White Plains, in New York.

**November 16, 1776**

British forces under William Howe, fifth viscount Howe, defeat George Washington and the Continental army at the Battle of Fort Washington in upper Manhattan. Nearly 3,000 Americans are taken prisoner.

**November 20, 1776**

George Washington and the Continental army abandon Fort Lee, in New Jersey, ending the New York campaign and leaving New York City in British control. Washington retreats southward through New Jersey.

**December 19, 1776**

Thomas Paine issues *The Crisis*, the first in a series of pamphlets written to inspire American patriots. It begins, "These are the times that try men's souls."

**December 25–26, 1776**

After crossing the Delaware River by night, George Washington and the Continental army attack and defeat Hessian forces under the command of Johann Rall at Trenton, New Jersey.

**January 3, 1777**

George Washington and the Continental army defeat British forces under Charles Mawhood near Princeton, New Jersey.

**January 6–May 28, 1777**

The Continental army, under the command of George Washington, encamps for the winter at Morristown, New Jersey.

**September 11, 1777**

British forces under William Howe, fifth viscount Howe, defeat George Washington and the Continental army at the Battle of Brandywine near Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.

**September 22–26, 1777**

British forces under William Howe, fifth viscount Howe, begin their occupation of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**October 4, 1777**

British forces under William Howe, fifth viscount Howe, defeat George Washington and the Continental army at the Battle of Germantown in Pennsylvania.

**October 17, 1777**

Surrounded at Saratoga, New York, British general John Burgoyne surrenders his army to American forces under Horatio Gates and Benedict Arnold after a British victory on September 19 and then an American victory on October 7.

**December 1777–June 1778**

The Continental army, under the command of George Washington, encamps for the winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

**June 28, 1778**

The Continental army, under the command of George Washington, battles British forces under Sir Henry Clinton at Monmouth Court House, New Jersey.

**January 1781**

After a mutiny of Pennsylvania and then New Jersey troops, George Washington orders the execution of several Continental army soldiers.

**October 19, 1781**



Combined American and French forces compel the surrender of a British army under Charles Cornwallis, first marquess Cornwallis at Yorktown, ending the major fighting in the Revolutionary War.

**March 15, 1783**

George Washington issues the Newburgh Address, a short speech to officers of the Continental army advising them to have patience with Congress, which had not paid them the pensions they were due. Washington's intervention ended the threat of a mutiny against civil authorities.

**September 3, 1783**

The Treaty of Paris is signed in Paris, France, by Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, John Jay, and David Hartley. In the document, Britain formally recognizes American independence and cedes to America all lands south of the Great Lakes and east of the Mississippi River except for the Florida colonies.

**December 23, 1783**

George Washington presents his resignation as commander in chief of the Continental army to Congress in Annapolis, Maryland.

**August 1786**

Shays' Rebellion, an armed revolt by debt-stricken farmers, begins in Massachusetts.

**May–September 1787**

The Constitutional Convention of 1787 meets in Philadelphia to amend the Articles of Confederation. Virginia delegates include George Washington, John Blair, James Madison, George Mason, Edmund Randolph, and George Wythe. Patrick Henry is elected to the convention but declines to attend, later explaining, "I smelt a rat."

**May 25, 1787**

The Constitutional Convention, convened in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, elects George Washington to preside over its proceedings.

**June 21, 1788**

New Hampshire votes to ratify the U.S. Constitution, meeting the requirement that at least nine states ratify it.

**September 13, 1788**

The Continental Congress passes a resolution putting the newly ratified U.S. Constitution into effect.

**February 4, 1789**

George Washington is unanimously elected the first U.S. president by electors chosen by votes of individual state assemblies.

**April 30, 1789**

George Washington is inaugurated the first U.S. president at Federal Hall in New York City. Robert Livingston, the chancellor, or highest judicial officer, of New York, administers the oath of office.

**December 5, 1792**

George Washington is, for the second time, unanimously elected U.S. president by electors chosen by votes of individual state assemblies.

**March 4, 1793**

George Washington is inaugurated for a second term as U.S. president in the Senate Chamber of Congress Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. William Cushing, associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, administers the oath of office.

**September 19, 1796**

"The Address of General Washington to the People of the United States" is published in David C. Claypoole's *American Daily Advertiser* in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. George Washington's farewell address explains his reasons for quitting the presidency after two terms.

**March 4, 1797**

George Washington's second term as U.S. president ends and he retires from public life.

**December 14, 1799**

George Washington dies at Mount Vernon after a short illness.

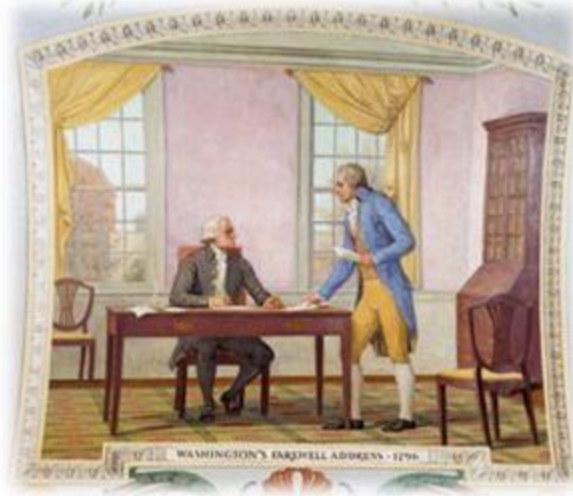
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Jean-Antoine Houdon: *George Washington*  
Portrait bust of George Washington by Jean-Antoine Houdon,  
c. late 18th–early 19th century; in the Smithsonian  
American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.



Washington delivering his inaugural address  
*Washington Delivering His Inaugural Address April 1789,*  
*in the Old City Hall, New-York, steel engraving*  
 by Henry S. Sadd, 1849, after a painting by Tompkins H. Matteson.



Washington's Farewell Address  
 Alexander Hamilton (right) helping Pres. George Washington write  
 his farewell address. Painting by Allyn Cox, Cox Corridors,  
 the Great Experiment Hall in the House of Representatives  
 wing of the U.S. Capitol building, Washington, D.C.



The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis *The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis*  
 (at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 19, 1781), oil on canvas  
 by John Trumbull, completed in 1820; in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, Washington, D.C.  
 The painting captures the moment when major fighting during the  
 American Revolution ended and the colonies achieved independence.

# Timeline of the American Revolution

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_the\\_American\\_Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_American_Revolution)

**Timeline of the American Revolution**—[timeline](#) of the political upheaval culminating in the 18th century in which [Thirteen Colonies](#) in [North America](#) joined together for independence from the [British Empire](#), and after victory in the [Revolutionary War](#) combined to form the [United States of America](#). The [American Revolution](#) includes political, social, and military aspects. The revolutionary era is generally considered to have begun with the passage of the [Stamp Act](#) in 1765 and ended with the ratification of the [United States Bill of Rights](#) in 1791. The military phase of the revolution, the American Revolutionary War, lasted from 1775 to 1783.

## 1600s

1629

- The [Cambridge Agreement](#) (August 26, 1629)

1683

- The [Lords of Trade](#) issues [quo warranto](#) writs for the charters of several North American colonies, including Massachusetts (June 3)

1684

- [Revocation of the Charter](#) by [Charles II](#). For technical reasons the Massachusetts writ is never served, and the agreement is formally vacated when the chancery court issues a [scire facias](#) writ formally annulling the charter. The proceedings are arranged so that the time for the colonial authorities to defend the charter expires before they even learn of the event (June 18)

1686

- Charter arrives in Boston establishing [the Dominion of New England in America](#) (May 14)

1689

- [1689 Boston revolt](#), Leaders of the former [Massachusetts Bay Colony](#) reclaim control of the government. In other colonies, members of governments displaced return to power (April 18)

1691

- [William III](#) and [Mary II](#) approve the charter formally establishing the [Province of Massachusetts Bay](#) (October 7)

## 1740s and 1750s

1747

- [Ohio Company of Virginia](#) formed

1754

- Outbreak of the [French and Indian War](#); colonial militias play a role





- King George's [Royal Proclamation of 1763](#) establishes administration in territories newly ceded by France. To prevent further violence between settlers and Native Americans, the Proclamation sets a western boundary on the American colonies (October 7)
- [Navigation Acts](#) are re-enforced by [George Grenville](#) as a part of his attempt to reassert unified economic control over the [British Empire](#) following the [Seven Years' War](#)

1764

- The [Sugar Act](#) (April 5), intended to raise revenues, and the [Currency Act](#) (September 1), prohibiting the colonies from issuing paper money, are passed by [Parliament](#). These Acts, coming during the economic slump that followed the French and Indian War, are resented by the colonists and lead to protest

1765

- Parliament enacts (March 22) the [Stamp Act](#) to impose control and help defray the cost of keeping troops in America to control the colonists, imposing a tax on many types of printed materials used in the colonies. Seen as a violation of rights, the Act sparks violent demonstrations in several Colonies. Virginia's [House of Burgesses](#) adopts (May 29) the [Virginia Resolves](#) claiming that, under British law, Virginians could be taxed only by an assembly to which they had elected representatives
- Parliament enacts (March 24) the [Quartering Act](#), requiring the [Colonies](#) to provide housing, food, and other provisions to British troops. The act is resisted or circumvented in most of the colonies. In 1767 and again in 1769, Parliament suspended the governor and legislature of [New York](#) for failure to comply
- Delegates from nine colonies attend the [Stamp Act Congress](#) which adopts (October 19) a [Declaration of Rights and Grievances](#) and petitions Parliament and the king to repeal the Act

1766

- Although British Parliament repeals the unpopular [Stamp Act](#) of the previous year, in the simultaneous [Declaratory Act](#), Parliament asserts its "full power and authority to make laws and statutes ... to bind the colonies and people of America ... in all cases whatsoever", which is designed to overrule actions by the legislative assemblies of each colony, which had traditionally held authority (March 18)
- [Liberty pole](#) erected in New York City commons in celebration of the Stamp Act repeal (May 21). An intermittent skirmish with the British garrison over the removal of this and other poles, and their replacement by the [Sons of Liberty](#), rages until the [Province of New York](#) is under the control of the revolutionary [New York Provincial Congress](#) in 1775

1767

- Parliament aims to assert its right to tax the American colonies after the failure of the [Sugar Act](#) and [Stamp Act](#). The [Townshend Acts](#), named for [Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend](#), are passed by Parliament, placing duties on many items imported into America (June 29). The American colonists, who were denied any representation in Parliament, strongly condemned the Acts as an egregious abuse of power.

1768

- Britain's [Secretary of State for the Colonies](#), [Lord Hillsborough](#), orders colonial governors to stop their own assemblies from endorsing [Adams' circular letter](#) (April). Hillsborough also orders the governor of Massachusetts to dissolve the general court if the Massachusetts assembly does not revoke the letter. By month's end, the assemblies of [New Hampshire](#), [Connecticut](#) and [New Jersey](#) have endorsed the letter

- A British warship, [HMS Romney](#), armed with 50 cannon sailed into Boston harbor after a call for help from custom commissioners who were constantly being harassed by Boston agitators (May). A customs official was later locked up in the cabin of *Liberty*, a [sloop](#) owned by John Hancock (June). Imported wine was unloaded illegally into Boston without payment of duties. Following this incident, customs officials seized Hancock's sloop as [HMS Liberty \(1768\)](#). After threats of violence from Bostonians, the customs officials escaped to an island off Boston, then requested the intervention of British troops
- The governor of Massachusetts dissolves the general court (July) after the legislature defies his order to revoke Adams' circular letter. In August, in Boston and New York, merchants agree to boycott most British goods until the Townshend Acts are repealed. In September, at a town meeting in Boston, residents are urged to arm themselves. Later in September, British warships sail into Boston Harbor, then two regiments of British infantry land in Boston and set up permanent residence to keep order

1769

- *To the Betrayed Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New York* broadside published anonymously by local [Son of Liberty Alexander McDougall](#) (December 16)

1770s

1770



*The Boston Massacre, an engraving by patriot Paul Revere*

- [Golden Hill incident](#) in which British troops wound civilians, including one death (January 19)
- [Lord North](#) becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain (January 28)
- Shooting of [Christopher Seider](#) (February 22)
- [Boston Massacre](#) (March 5)

1771

- [Battle of Alamance](#) in [North Carolina](#) (May 16)

1772

- [Samuel Adams](#) organizes the [Committees of Correspondence](#)
- [Pine Tree Riot](#) (April 13–14)
- The [Watauga Association](#) in what would become Tennessee declares itself independent (May)
- [Gaspee Affair](#) (June 9)

- [Somerset v Stewart](#) A British court ruling confirms that there is nothing in English [common law](#) that supports slavery in England (June 22)

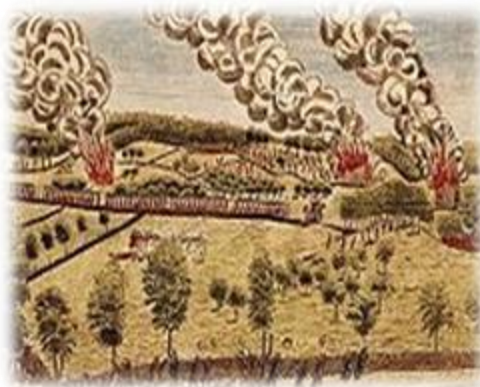
1773

- [James Rivington](#)'s *New-York Gazetteer* begins publication (April 22)
- [Parliament](#) passes the [Tea Act](#), requiring the colonies to buy tea solely from the [East India Company](#) rather than a variety of sources (May 10)
- *Association of the Sons of Liberty in New York* published by local [Sons of Liberty](#) (December 15)
- Colonists in all major ports refuse to allow tea to be landed
- [Boston Tea Party](#) (December 16)

1774

- [Benjamin Franklin](#), Massachusetts' agent in London, is ridiculed before Parliament (January 29)
- [Lord Dunmore's War](#) (May–October)
- British pass [Intolerable Acts](#), including:
  - [Boston Port Act](#) (March 31)
  - [Administration of Justice Act](#) (May 20)
  - [Massachusetts Government Act](#) (May 20)
  - A second [Quartering Act](#) (June 2)
  - [Quebec Act](#) (June 22)
- [Powder Alarm](#), General Gage's secret raid on the Cambridge powder magazine (September 1)
- [First Continental Congress](#), (September 5 – October 26); 12 colonies send delegates; major actions:
  - [Declaration and Resolves](#), also known as Declaration of Rights (October 14)<sup>[2]</sup>
  - [Continental Association](#) (October 20)<sup>[3]</sup>
  - [Petition to the King](#) (October 26)
- [Suffolk Resolves](#), [Suffolk County, Massachusetts](#) (September 9)
- Burning of the [Peggy Stewart](#) (October 19)
- [Greenwich Tea Party](#) (December 22)

1775



[Battles of Lexington and Concord.](#)

- [Conciliatory Resolution](#) (February 27) in Parliament
- [Paul Revere's Midnight Ride](#) (April 18)
- [Battles of Lexington and Concord](#), followed by the [Siege of Boston](#) (April 19)
- [Gunpowder Incident](#) (April 20)



- Skenesboro, New York (now [Whitehall, New York](#)) captured by Lieutenant Samuel Herrick (May 9)
- [Fort Ticonderoga captured](#) by Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold and the Green Mountain Boys (May 10)
- [Second Continental Congress](#) meets (May 10)
- [Battle of Machias](#) (June 11–12)
- Congress votes to create [Continental Army](#) out of the [militia](#) units around [Boston](#) and appointed [George Washington](#) of [Virginia](#) as commanding general. This would later become the modern [United States Army](#) (June 14)
- [Battle of Bunker Hill](#) (June 17)
- Washington arrives in [Cambridge, Massachusetts](#) to take command of the [Continental Army](#) (July 2)
- [Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms](#) issued (July 6)
- [Olive Branch Petition](#) sent to [King George III](#) (July 8)
- King George III issues a proclamation declaring the colonies in rebellion (August 23)
- [Continental Navy](#) established by the Second Continental Congress (October 13)
- [Snow Campaign](#) (November–December)
- [Dunmore's Proclamation](#) issued by [Lord Dunmore](#), [colonial governor of Virginia](#), offering freedom to slaves that abandon their Patriot masters and fight for the British (November 7)
- [Continental Marines](#) established by Continental Congress. They would become the modern day [United States Marine Corps](#) (November 10)
- [Battle of Kemp's Landing](#) (November 15)
- [Siege of Savage's Old Fields](#) (November 19–21)
- [Henry Knox](#) transported [fifty-nine captured cannons](#) (taken from [Fort Ticonderoga](#) and [Fort Crown Point](#)) from upstate New York to Boston, Massachusetts; took 56 days to complete (December 5, 1775 – January 24, 1776)
- [Battle of Great Bridge](#) (December 9)
- British forces repulse an attack by Continental Army generals [Richard Montgomery](#) and [Benedict Arnold](#) at the [Battle of Quebec](#) (December 31)

1776

- [Burning of Norfolk](#) (January 1)
- [New Hampshire](#) ratifies the first [state constitution](#) (January 5)
- [Thomas Paine](#) publishes [Common Sense](#) (January 10)
- [David Mathews](#) appointed Mayor of New York, the highest ranking civilian officer for English North America for the duration of the Revolution
- [Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge](#) (February 27)
- [Battle of the Rice Boats](#) (March 2–3)
- [Battle of Nassau](#) (March 3–4)
- [Fortification of Dorchester Heights](#) results in British forces evacuating Boston (March 4–5)
- [British evacuate Boston](#) (March 17)
- The [Continental Army](#) departs its first winter encampment at [Cambridge, Massachusetts](#) (April 4)
- Congress opens American ports to trade with all other nations except Britain (April 6)
- [Pennsylvania Provincial Conference](#) (June 18–25)
- [Battle of Sullivan's Island](#) (June 28)
- [Thomas Hickey](#) hanged for role in plot to assassinate George Washington (June 28). British Colonial Loyalist [New York Mayor](#) David Mathews previously arrested in [Flatbush, Brooklyn](#) for his role in the plot (June 22)
- [Battle of Turtle Gut Inlet](#) (June 29)

- Largest assembly of British naval fleet in history commences off the coasts of [Staten Island](#), [Brooklyn](#) and New Jersey (July 3)



*Declaration of Independence, 1819 painting by John Trumbull*

- Second Continental Congress enacts (July 2) a [resolution declaring independence](#) from the British Empire, and then approves (July 4) the written "United States Declaration of Independence"
- [Sons of Liberty](#) topple the statue of [King George III](#) in [Bowling Green](#) (July 9)
- [Battle of Long Island](#), a.k.a. *Battle of Brooklyn* (August 27)
- [British prison ships](#) begin in [Wallabout Bay](#), New York
- [Staten Island Peace Conference](#) (September 11)
- [Landing at Kip's Bay](#) (September 15)
- [Battle of Harlem Heights](#) (September 16)
- [Great Fire of New York](#) (September 21–22)
- [Nathan Hale](#) captured and executed for [espionage](#) (September 22)
- [Battle of Valcour Island](#) (October 11)
- [Battle of Pell's Point](#) (October 18)
- [Battle of White Plains](#) (October 29)
- [Battle of Fort Cumberland](#) (November 10–29)
- [Battle of Fort Mifflin](#) (November 16)
- [Battle of Red Bank](#) (November 20)
- [Ambush of Geary](#) (December 14)
- [Battle of Red Bank](#) (December 23–26)



*Washington Crossing the Delaware, painting 1851 by Emanuel Leutze*

- [Battle of Trenton](#) (December 26)

1777

- [Battle of the Assunpink Creek](#), also known as the Second Battle of Trenton (January 2)
- [Battle of Princeton](#) (January 3)
- [Continental Army](#) enters second winter encampment of the war at [Morristown](#) (January 6)
- [Forage War](#) (January–March):

- [Battle of Millstone](#) (January 20)
- [Battle of Drake's Farm](#) (February 1)
- [Battle of Quibbletown](#) (February 8)
- [Battle of Spanktown](#) (February 23)
- [Battle of Bound Brook](#) (April 13)
- British regulars, under Major General [William Tryon](#), burn and loot [Danbury, Connecticut](#) (April 26)
- [Battle of Ridgefield](#) (April 27)
- [Battle of Thomas Creek](#) (May 17)
- [Meigs Raid](#) (May 23)
- [First Middlebrook encampment](#) (May 28 – July 2)
- [Battle of Short Hills](#) (June 26)
- [Fort Ticonderoga](#) abandoned by the Americans due to advancing British troops placing cannon on [Mount Defiance](#) (July 5)
- British retake [Fort Ticonderoga](#) (July 6)
- [Battle of Hubbardton](#) (July 7)
- Delegates in Vermont, which was not one of the [Thirteen Colonies](#), establish a [republic](#) and adopt a [constitution](#), the first in what is now the territory of the United States to prohibit [slavery](#) (July 8)
- [Battle of Fort Anne](#) (July 8)
- [Siege of Fort Stanwix](#) (August 2–23)
- [Battle of Oriskany](#) (August 6)
- [Battle of Machias \(1777\)](#) (August 13–14)
- [Battle of Bennington](#) (August 16)
- [Battle of Staten Island](#) (August 22)
- [Siege of Fort Henry](#) (September 1)
- [Battle of Cooch's Bridge](#) (September 3)
- [Battle of Brandywine](#) (September 11)
- [Battle of the Clouds](#) (September 16)
- [Battle of Paoli](#) (Paoli Massacre) (September 20)
- British occupation of [Philadelphia](#) (September 26)
- [Battle of Germantown](#) (October 4)



*[Surrender of General Burgoyne](#)*, 1821 painting by [John Trumbull](#)

- [Battle of Forts Clinton and Montgomery](#) (October 6)
- Two [Battles of Saratoga](#) (September 19 and October 7) conclude with the surrender of the British army under [General Burgoyne](#).
- [Battle of Red Bank](#) (October 22)
- [Articles of Confederation](#) adopted by the Second Continental Congress (November 15)
- Capture of [Fort Mifflin](#), (November 16) and [Fort Mercer](#), (November 18)
- [Battle of Gloucester \(1777\)](#) (November 25)

- [Battle of White Marsh](#) (December 5 – December 8)
- [Battle of Matson's Ford](#) (December 11)
- Rivington's Gazetter renamed Royal Gazette (December 13)
- Continental Army in third winter quarters at [Valley Forge](#) (December 19, 1777 – June 19, 1778)

## 1778

- [Treaty of Amity and Commerce](#) and [Treaty of Alliance](#) with France (February 6)
- France is the first foreign country to recognise the flag of the United States, on the ship of [John Paul Jones](#) (February 14)
- [Battle of Quinton's Bridge](#) (March 18)
- [John Paul Jones](#), in command of the *Ranger*, attacks [Whitehaven](#) in England, America's first naval engagement outside North America (April 20)
- The [Great Chain](#) across the Hudson is completed (April 30)
- [Battle of Crooked Billet](#) (May 1)
- [Battle of Barren Hill](#) (May 20)
- [Battle of Cobleskill](#) (May 30)
- British forces withdraw from [Philadelphia](#) (June 18)
- Whaleboat attack on [Flatbush, Brooklyn](#) to kidnap New York Mayor [David Mathews](#) and other British and Loyalist figures partially succeeds in securing Captain [James Moncrief](#) and Theophylact Bache, President of the [New York Chamber of Commerce](#), for future prisoner exchange (June)
- [Battle of Monmouth](#) (June 28)
- [Battle of Wyoming](#) (July 3)
- [Battle of Ushant](#) (July 27)
- [Battle of Rhode Island](#) (August 29)
- [Baylor Massacre](#) (September 27)
- [Culper Spy Ring](#) is begun (October)
- [Battle of Chestnut Neck](#) (October 6)
- [Affair at Little Egg Harbor](#) (October 15)
- [Cherry Valley massacre](#) (November 11)
- [Capture of Savannah](#), British successfully launch their [southern strategy](#) (December 29)
- Majority of Continental Army in fourth winter quarters at [Middlebrook Cantonment](#) (November 30, 1778 – June 3, 1779)
- Major General [Israel Putnam](#) chooses [Redding, Connecticut](#) as his winter encampment to keep an eye on the storehouses in [Danbury, Connecticut](#) (1778–1779)

## 1779

- [Battle of Beaufort](#) (February 3, 1779)
- [Battle of Kettle Creek](#) (February 14)
- [Siege of Fort Vincennes](#) (February 23–25)
- [Chesapeake raid](#) (May 10–24)
- [Battle of Stono Ferry](#) (June 20)
- [Tryon's raid](#) (July 3–14)
  - Tryon's division lands in [East Haven, Connecticut](#), met with spirited resistance from a band of local militia, take [Black Rock Fort](#) (July 5)
  - [Battle of Fairfield](#) destroys 54 barns, 47 storehouses, burned 83 homes, two churches, and municipal buildings including a schoolhouse, the courthouse and the local jail (July 7)
  - [Battle of Norwalk](#) weakly opposed by about 50 local militia, easily dispersed. The destruction of the village and its commercial infrastructure destroyed (July 11)



- [Battle of Stony Point](#) (July 16)
- [Battle of Minisink](#) (July 22)
- [Penobscot Expedition](#) (July 24 – August 14)
- [Battle of Paulus Hook](#) (August 19)
- [Sullivan Expedition](#) (June 18 – October 3)
  - [Battle of Newtown](#) (August 29)
- [Siege of Savannah](#) (September 16 – October 18)
- [Battle of Baton Rouge](#) (September 21)
- [Battle of Flamborough Head](#) (September 23)
- Continental Army in fifth winter quarters at [Morristown](#) (December 1779 – May 1780)

## 1780s

### 1780



*[Surrender of Lord Cornwallis](#) at Yorktown, 1820 painting by John Trumbull*

- Congress establishes the [Court of Appeals in Cases of Capture](#) to provide for final adjudication of appeals from state court [prize](#) cases involving disposition of ships and cargo allegedly seized from the British (January 15)
- [Battle of Cape St. Vincent](#) (January 16)
- A [stockade](#) known as [Fort Nashborough](#) is founded on the [banks](#) of the [Cumberland River](#) (January 28). Two years later, the site is renamed [Nashville](#)
- Some 8,000 British forces under General [Henry Clinton](#) arrive in [Charleston, South Carolina](#), from New York (February 1)
- [New York cedes](#) to Congress its western claims, including territory west of [Lake Ontario](#) (February 1). In 1792, New York will sell the [Erie Triangle](#) to [Pennsylvania](#)
- [Battle of Young's House](#) (February 3) (In the north)
- [Bombardment of Fort Charlotte](#), after a two-week [siege](#), Spanish general, [colonial governor of Louisiana](#), and [Viceroy of New Spain](#) [Bernardo de Gálvez](#) captures [Fort Charlotte](#), taking the port of [Mobile](#) (in present-day [Alabama](#)) from the British (March 14). Fort Charlotte was the last remaining British frontier post capable of threatening [New Orleans](#) in [Spanish Louisiana](#). Its fall drove the British from the western reaches of [West Florida](#) and reduced the British military presence in West Florida to its capital, [Pensacola](#).
- [Siege of Charleston](#) (March 29 – May 12)
  - British Army troops under General Henry Clinton and naval forces under Admiral [Mariot Arbuthnot](#) besiege [Charleston, South Carolina](#). British ships sail past [Fort Moultrie](#) on [Sullivan's Island](#) to occupy [Charleston Harbor](#) (April 8)
  - [Battle of Monck's Corner](#) (April 14)
  - [Battle of Lenud's Ferry](#) (May 6)

- Fort Moultrie falls to the British (May 7)
- American General [Benjamin Lincoln](#) surrenders Charleston to the British. The British lose 255 men while capturing a large American garrison (May 12)
- [Bird's invasion of Kentucky](#) (May 25 – August 4) (In the west)
- [Battle of Waxhaws](#); a clash between [Continental Army](#) forces under [Abraham Buford](#) and a mainly [Loyalist](#) force led by [Banastre Tarleton](#) occurs near [Lancaster, South Carolina](#) in the [Waxhaws](#) area (close to present-day [Buford](#)). The British destroyed the American forces (May 29)
- [Alexander's Old Field](#) in [Beckhamville, South Carolina](#) (June 6)
- [Battle of Connecticut Farms](#) (June 7) (In the north)
- [Battle of Mobley's Meeting House](#) (June 10)
- [Battle of Ramsour's Mill](#) (June 20)
- [Battle of Springfield](#); with the attempted British invasion of New Jersey stopped at Connecticut Farms and Springfield, major fighting in the North ends (June 23)
- [Robert Morris](#) is appointed [Superintendent of Finance](#), a post akin to Prime Minister, by Congress (June 27)
- [Expédition Particulière](#) (July 11)
- [Battle of Williamson's Plantation](#) (AKA [Huck's Defeat](#)) (July 12)
- [Battle of Bull's Ferry](#) (July 20–21) (In the north)
- [Battle of Colson's Mill](#) (July 21)
- [Battle of Rocky Mount](#) (August 1)
- [Battle of Hanging Rock](#) (August 6)
- [Battle of Piqua](#) (August 8) (In the west)
- [Battle of Camden](#), British General [Cornwallis](#) gains a humiliating victory over [Gates](#) in South Carolina (August 16)
- [Battle of Fishing Creek](#) (August 18)
- [Battle of Musgrove Mill](#) (August 18)
- [Battle of Black Mingo](#) (August 28)
- [Battle of Wahab's Plantation](#) (September 21)
- Major [John André](#) captured and the treason of [Benedict Arnold](#) is exposed (September 23)
- [Battle of Charlotte](#) (September 26)
- John André executed as a spy (October 2)
- [Battle of Kings Mountain](#) (October 7)
- [Royalton Raid](#) (October 16)
- [Battle of Klock's Field](#) (October 19)
- [Battle of Fishdam Ford](#) (November 9)
- [Battle of Blackstock's Farm](#) (November 20)
- [Continental Army](#) enters sixth winter with encampments in [New York's Hudson Highlands](#), [Pompton](#), and [Morristown](#), New Jersey (December)

## 1781

- The future [King William IV](#), the only active member of the [British Royal Family](#) to visit the former 13 colonies, takes up residence in the [Rose and Crown Tavern](#) on Staten Island.
- [Pennsylvania Line Mutiny](#) (January 1–29)
- [Raid on Richmond](#) (January 1–19)
- [Battle of Cowpens](#) (January 17)
- [Pompton Mutiny](#) (January 20)
- [Battle of Cowan's Ford](#) (February 1)
- [Pyle's Massacre](#) (February 24)
- [Articles of Confederation](#) ratified (March 1)

- [Skirmish at Waters Creek](#) (March 8)
- [Battle of Guilford Court House](#) (March 15)
- [Battle of Cape Henry](#) (March 16)
- [Siege of Fort Watson](#) (April 15 - April 23)
- [Battle of Blandford](#) (April 25)
- [Battle of Hobkirk's Hill](#) (April 25)
- [Action at Osborne's](#) (April 27)
- [Siege of Fort Motte](#) (May 8–12)
- [Siege of Augusta](#) (May 22 – June 6)
- [Siege of Ninety-Six](#) (May 22 – June 19)
- [Raid of Point of Fork](#) (June 5)
- [Battle of Spencer's Ordinary](#) (June 26)
- [Battle of Green Spring](#) (July 6)
- [Francisco's Fight](#) (July 9–24)
- [Battle of the Chesapeake](#) (September 5)
- [Battle of Groton Heights](#) (September 6)
- [Battle of Eutaw Springs](#) (September 8)
- The British surrender at [Yorktown](#) (October 19)
- [Continental Army](#) returns to [Hudson Highlands](#) and [Morristown](#) New Jersey for its seventh winter encampment (December)
- [Bank of North America](#) chartered (December 31)

## 1782

- The British House of Commons votes against further war, informally [recognizing American independence](#) (February 27)
- [Gnadenhutten massacre](#) (March 8)
- [Battle of Little Mountain](#) (March 22)
- [Newburgh letter](#) sent to George Washington by [Lewis Nicola](#) (May 22)
- [Crawford expedition](#) (May 25 – June 12)
- [Siege of Bryan Station](#) (August 15–17)
- [Battle of Blue Licks](#) (August 19)
- [Battle of the Combahee River](#) (August 27)
- [Siege of Fort Henry \(1782\)](#) (September 11–13)
- [Continental Army](#) moves into its eighth and final winter quarters, at the [New Windsor](#) Cantonment and in the [Hudson Highlands](#) (November)
- Preliminary Articles of Peace are signed by British negotiator [Richard Oswald](#) and representatives of the United States of America (November 30)
- British evacuate [Charleston, South Carolina](#) (December 14)
- Last skirmish of the conflict takes place near [Cedar Bridge Tavern](#) in [Barnegat Township, New Jersey](#) (December 27)

## 1783



*Washington's Entry into New York by Currier & Ives (1857)*

- [Newburgh Conspiracy](#) (March 10–15)
- [Pennsylvania Mutiny of 1783](#) (June 20–24)
- The [Treaty of Paris \(1783\)](#) ends the [American Revolutionary War](#) (September 3)
- The [British evacuate New York](#), marking the end of British rule. British loyalist refugees retreat to [Quebec and Nova Scotia](#). General George Washington triumphantly returns with the Continental Army (November 25).
- [George Washington resigns as commander-in-chief](#) of the Continental Army (December 23)

## 1784

- The [Treaty of Paris is ratified](#) by the [Congress](#) (January 14)
  - [Jay–Gardoqui Treaty](#) with Spain fails to be ratified. Negotiations continued until 1786
- The [Treaty of Paris](#) is ratified by the British (April 9)
- Ratified treaties are exchanged in [Paris](#) between the two nations (May 12)
- "The State of Frankland," later known as [Franklin](#), secedes from North Carolina (August 23)
- [Robert Morris](#) resigns as [Superintendent of Finance](#) and is not replaced (November 1)

## 1785

- Congress refuses admission of the [State of Franklin](#) to the Union (May 16)
- [Treaty of Hopewell](#) (November 28)

## 1786

- [Shays' Rebellion](#) (August 29 – June 1787)
- [Annapolis Convention](#) fails (September 11–14)

## 1787

- [Northwest Ordinance](#) enacted (July 13)



***Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States,  
by Howard Chandler Christy (1940)***

- [Constitutional Convention](#) in Philadelphia (May 25 - September 17)
- [Delaware](#) (December 7), [Pennsylvania](#) (December 12), and [New Jersey](#) (December 18) ratify the [Constitution](#)

## 1788

- North Carolina reasserted its claim to its Overmountain region, at which time Franklin ceases to exist
- [Georgia](#), [Connecticut](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Maryland](#), [South Carolina](#), [New Hampshire](#), [Virginia](#) and [New York](#) ratify the Constitution
- [United States Constitution](#) ratified (June 21)



- [Cyrus Griffin](#) resigns as "President of the United States in Congress Assembled" (November 2), and with the exceptions of [John Jay](#) and John Knox remaining as Secretaries of Foreign Affairs and War respectively; and [Michael Hillegas](#) remaining as Treasurer, the United States of America temporarily ceases to exist. [citation needed]
- The first federal Elections for the House of Representatives begin
- [1788–89 United States presidential election](#) (December 15, 1788 – January 10, 1789). [George Washington](#) is elected president, and [John Adams](#) is elected vice president.

## 1789

- [Philip Pell](#), only member in attendance, adjourns the [Congress of the Confederation](#) *sine die* (March 2)
- Members of the [1st United States Congress](#) begin to take their seats at [Federal Hall](#), New York (March 4)
- [House of Representatives](#) first achieves a quorum and elects its officers (April 1)
- [Senate](#) first achieves a quorum and elects its officers (April 6)
- Joint session of Congress counts the [Electoral College](#) ballots, certifies that George Washington has been unanimously elected [President of the United States](#) (April 6)
- Adams becomes the first vice president (April 21)
- Washington becomes the first president, at [Federal Hall](#) in New York City (April 30)
- The [Tariff Act of 1789](#) is signed into law (July 4)
- [Charles Thomson](#) resigns as secretary of Congress and hands over the Great Seal, bringing an end to the [Confederation Congress](#) (July)
- [Judiciary Act of 1789](#) (September 24)
- Congress approves twelve articles of amendment to the Constitution, the [Bill of Rights](#) (September 25)
- [North Carolina](#) becomes the 12th state to ratify the Constitution, with a vote of 194–77 (November 21)

## 1790s

### 1791

- [Bill of Rights](#) ratified. (December 15)

### 1792

- [1792 United States presidential election](#): [George Washington](#) reelected president, [John Adams](#) reelected vice president.

### 1793

- President Washington and Vice President Adams begin their second terms (March 4).

### 1795

- [Jay's Treaty](#) ratified in June toward resolving post Revolution tensions between the United States and Great Britain. First use of arbitration in modern diplomatic history for [Canada–United States border](#) disputes.

### 1796

- Six Northwest Territory forts and two Upstate New York forts that remained under British control are ceded to the United States.
- [1796 United States presidential election](#): [John Adams](#) is elected president, [Thomas Jefferson](#) elected vice president.

1797

- Adams becomes the second president, Jefferson becomes the second vice president (March 4).

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## Monuments to George Washington

Visit these Web Links to see several

Memorials to George Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War and first president of the United States.

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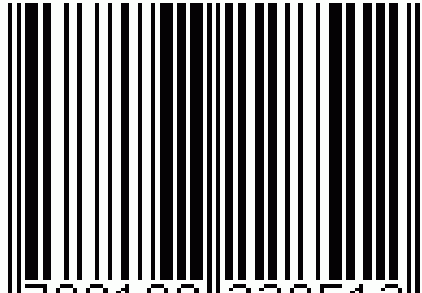
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